

26 September 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Robert L. Bannerman
Deputy Director for Support

SUBJECT : The Cafeteria

1. I have no wish whatsoever to stick my nose in your business or burden you with the kind of gratuitous advice I am sure you are already receiving from many quarters. I do, however, have a couple of comments on what strikes me as at least a potentially serious problem. I am passing these comments in this private manner rather than through some other channel or by raising them in a public forum such as the Morning Meeting, so you can take them for whatever value they may have (which may be little) without my thoughts adding to your burdens.

2. The great cafeteria issue has many aspects of a teapot tempest. On the other hand I think there is at least a potentially serious problem involved here of morale and, perhaps, even health. I made a passing reference to the cafeteria at my staff meeting last week and was struck by the intensity and unanimity of my colleagues' feelings on this subject. My people are certainly not trouble makers or chronic complainers. It was I, not they, who brought the subject up. When I did, however, the response was both immediate and very strong.

3. My people are convinced that over the past few months there has been a marked and steady deterioration in the service in the cafeteria, not to mention the quality (or quantity) of the food. This has reached the point, in their eyes, where most of them not only avoid eating in the cafeteria whenever possible but have some concern about the advisability of dining there on simple health grounds. My staff's feeling is unanimous that the personnel are not only rude and inefficient but slovenly and dangerously careless about personal cleanliness. When I took a few quiet soundings to get further details, one of my secretaries -- a very mature, poised and steady girl whom I have never previously heard say a critical word about anything or anybody -- remarked that at times when she was going through the cafeteria line the body order of unwashed employees almost made her ill.

4. I know you are only too well aware of this problem and certainly recognize how complex it is. I have no magic solutions to suggest. It would seem to my ignorant, lay eye that a contractual arrangement with a commercial operator such as Marriott or S&W might provide infinitely better service at at least equal if not lesser cost. If S&W at Seven Corners, for instance, can make a profit on the rather tasty meals they serve in aesthetic surroundings at prices no greater than those charged in our cafeteria when they are paying what must be a whopping rent to the Seven Corners management, then perhaps they could do the same here where the rent would be nominal or non-existent.

5. I am writing not to propose solutions but to advise you very quietly and privately what you probably already know from your own investigations: that we have here not only a teapot tempest but a morale-type problem of what appears to me to be very serious proportions.

George A. Carver, Jr.

Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

GAC:mee

Orig - Addressee

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